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POEMS

POEMS

BY

REGINALD LUCAS

LONDON

ARTHUR L. HUMPHREYS

1912

TO
MY SISTER
CONSTANCE PENN

PR
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1912

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POEMS

ST PETERSBURG

The Memorial Church of Alexander II. is built over the spot where he fell. The canal railing and piece of roadway remain as they were then.

FROM this rough rail, these rugged stones,
Speaks Russia in contrasted tones :—
The Sacrament of Liberty,
Or murder foul and cowardly ?

A self-devoted patriot band,
And tyrant with the blood-stained hand ?
Or monarch just, far-seeing, kind,
And brutal rebels deaf and blind ?

So far their destinies are clear ;
A martyr's shrine and temple here :
There, names forgotten, deed abhorred :
We judge :—when comes Thy time, O Lord ?

THE 'NIMROD'

Moored close to St Paul's Cathedral, October 1909

OUT of the dark uncharted seas,
That bar the earth's extremities,
They come, awhile to take their ease
And taste the joys of Home :
Here, where our English Thames rolls by,
And underneath an English sky,
St Paul's, our Faith to typify,
Upreats its sacred Dome.

Throughout the ages, rooted deep,
It stands, God's covenant to keep,
And guard the honoured dead who sleep,
Elect from all our Race :
With fervent brains and steadfast hands
They wrought for us in far-off lands,
Or here, left footprints in Time's sands
For gratitude to trace.

Here, where our Nation draws the breath
Of life, remember one who saith

THE 'NIMROD'

In midst of life we are in death ;
 Yet flee not from the strife !
To England England's brave are dear ;
This temple shrines their bodies here,
And bids them, dying, know no fear :—
 Through death they shall have life.

DUELLIST: *loquitur*

A MAIDEN, tender as a rose
That fragrant to perfection grows, (*En
garde!*)

All dew and sunshine in the morn,
Without suspicion of the thorn

The spreading leaves conceal: (*Allez!*)
Look and admire, if you will;
But dare not to come closer still: (*Parade!*)
Touch—and you'll find both rose and maid
Are guarded—keen the rose's blade,
And keen my trusty steel. (*Touché!*)

LOVE'S CONFIDENCE

THE maid to whom I write my verse
Is fair, and sweet, and dainty ;
To her fond swains their vows rehearse
And suitors come in plenty.

This pleases her,—though she's not vain,
(She's pleased, as I think, rightly ;)
Nor am I stung with jealous pain,
(I watch them daily, nightly.)

I see them kneeling round my shrine,
She stands among them—lonely ;
For all her love, I know, is mine,
My love she cares for only.

POSTSCRIPT

DON'T turn away and flout me, dear,
It wasn't I that changed ;
You had no cause to doubt me, dear,
Your heart, not mine, had ranged.

That I loved you, my constancy
By test of time can prove ;
You never loved (as you thought) *me* ;
You were in love with Love.

EASTER

THE Spring is waiting to be born ;
A thrush from out a swelling thorn
Flings forth a herald note ;
Looks east and west with searching eyes,
Then shouts again, as one that tries
To learn a song by rote.

Where beech and hazel fill the glade
Hangs a light amber-ruby shade,
The buds are ripe and red ;
Fresh sap of life is running through,
Reviving strength in bole and bough
That yesterday were dead.

And welcome scents are on the breeze
Of new-turned earth, new-blossomed trees,
First incense of the year :
Primroses star the ground with gold
And hardy daffodils are bold
To raise a crested spear.

POEMS

What if to-morrow's sun should rise
With icy winds and sleety skies,
 'Tis wanton rage, and vain
As fills a dying tyrant's mind,
Loth to depart and leave behind
 A brighter, happier reign.

Ah me, my spring was long ago,
When budding life was all aglow,
 And summer stretched before ;
June was all smiles ; then Autumn frowned ;
December's tempests came and drowned
 The hope that promise bore.

And can they never come again,
To me, Spring's youth and gladness? Then,
 O Preacher, take your text,
And surely prove that if on earth,
And in this life, there's no new birth,
 'Tis certain in the next.

THE SONG OF STRANGFORD LOUGH

I AM allied
To the ocean wide,
Its soul is instinct in me ;
Its breeze and brine
And its surge are mine,
And I am the inland sea.

At summer noon
I whisper and croon,
My ripples glitter and gleam ;
And blue skies rest
On my quiet breast,
Where sea-birds dawdle and dream.

Anon I'm at play
With wind all day,
I dance while it whistles and sings ;
And boats spread sail
To the friendly gale,
Like birds upon shining wings.

POEMS

Again I am black
When the tempest rack
And the rain squalls rend and sear ;
They roar aloud
From the shattered cloud,
And my white steeds plunge and rear.

But change as I will
You must love me still,
For the soul that's instinct in me ;
I am spirit and light,
I am force and might,
And I am the inland sea.

SUNDAY EVENING

A CHURCH bell whispers from a distant
hill,
And breaks the silence of the evening
air ;

Peace upon Earth—no heart so mute and still,
But pays the secret tribute of a prayer.

The din of city, and the stress of slum—
Here Heaven calms not with its soothing
breath :

Enduring, not adoring, men are dumb ;
Their peace is not of happiness, but death.

FORTITUDE

WHEN hearts are faint and weary,
And clouds are dark and dreary,
And mournful winds are moaning
overhead ;

When visions are dismaying,
We echo the old saying,
Let no man be called happy till he's dead.

Love thrilled us once and pleasure
In bright and brimming measure,
We drained the cup and filled and drank
again ;

We heeded not the morrow,
Were deaf and blind to sorrow,
Not death itself was more remote than pain.

Too soon the feast was finished,
No more to be replenished
We found the sparkling nectar had run out ;
No solace left in draining,
The bitter dregs remaining ;
We cannot even pass the cup about.

FORTITUDE

Oh, thriftless years of spending !
We thought there was no ending,
That life would be a running golden stream :
Then sudden came the waking
And showed us our mistaking ;
It all had been a wild delicious dream.

The solid earth is crumbling,
Our pride and spirit humbling,
The courage of our sanguine youth is past ;
No ray of hope relieving
This darkest of all grieving—
We cannot shelter others from the blast.

Come tempest late or early,
God show our duty clearly !
Let's do it, never slink nor flee away ;
This recompense ensuring,
The crown of brave enduring,
More precious than the ravishments of play.

COURAGE

O F all the boons the gods can give,
This one I ask, and ask in vain,
Well satisfied if I might live
My life, as it was lived, again.

Its faults and failures I confess,
Of cares and griefs its ample store ;
From evils past I shrink the less
As dreading future ills the more.

And yet this were the coward's part ;
'Go forward'—there's our duty clear :
The humble and the contrite heart
Knows not ingratitude or fear.

For this were man's most shameful lot,
To lie in an unhonoured grave,
Ev'n those who lov'd him daring not
To claim for him that he was brave.

ASHDOWN FOREST

ON ash and oak's unsullied green
The glow of evening falls ;
The joyous skylark trills unseen,
Unseen the cuckoo calls.

From gorse and bracken, copse and dell,
The jocund chorus rings ;
Sure, in this spot has come to dwell
The soul of all that sings.

The gleams and darkness of the grove
With tender thoughts inspire,
A heart long unattuned to love
Sings with the unseen choir.

Grant that when winter days are drear
These thoughts abide with me ;
These songs of gladness I may hear,
These sunshine visions see.

THE FACE OF THE WATERS

ON the dark surface of the stream
Some lamp-reflections dance and gleam,
With shafts of vivid light ;
What sparkled in the morning sun
Is sombre ere its course is run
And turns towards the night.

A symbol of man's life it flows,
The whence and whither no one knows,
Unfathomed, dark, austere ;
In whirls and eddies, tumult, strife,
With flashes—as the darkest life
Has bright points here, or here.

It passes without pause or haste :
Ah me ! what forces run to waste,
Withheld, anear, afar ;
Its goal enveloped in a shroud,
Polluted—yet above the cloud,
In Heaven, there's a star.

THE FACE OF THE WATERS

Towards the star the river flows,
Towards the land that no man knows,
 (Not knowing whence it came ;)
And in that light it shall find light,
Cleansed at a dawn that knows no night,
 Transfigured, yet the same.

CANNES

17th April 1910

BANKS of purple, fields of blue,
Streams of gold the sun shines through :
Storm clouds, from the mountain crest,
Drawn and melted in the West.

Gleam of hills and flush of sea
Mock the cares that fretted me ;
Cares uncalled for—storms I feared,
Lost in light, have disappeared.

After clouds have frowned in wrath,
Lowering along my path,
God grant, when I come to die,
Such a peace in earth and sky.

THOUGHTS IN A GARDEN

R OSES, roses all the way
Down the paths of Monterey ;
Coils of sweet wistaria
Creeping, climbing, near and far.

Summer radiance, youth of May,
Bud and bloom at Monterey ;
Purple iris, violets blue,
'Neath the feathery bamboo.

Finches sing, as who should say,
'Spring has come to Monterey' ;
Rising, falling, soothingly
Breaks the tideless azure sea.

Sunshine dancing on the bay
Underlying Monterey ;
Sunshine weaving shadowy spells
Round the glimmering Esterels.

POEMS

Green of pines and olives grey
Overhanging Monterey ;
Calm that cloudless sky distils
Floats and sleeps along the hills.

Sirens call us : we must stay
Life-long now at Monterey ;
Evermore for us they sing
Of these roses, of this Spring.

FAITH

THEY have taken my Lord away and I
know not where they have laid Him—
Cry of an agonised heart; wail of an
infinite faith:

They have taken my Lord away, and life is
unmeaning without Him:

Body had died on the Cross; Spirit survived
in the tomb.

Loss had not scattered the hope, death darkened
the light of the faithful;

Crucified, sold, and denied, He was their
Master and Lord:

Not to be seen as He moved, and spoke when
He taught His disciples,

He was invisible Truth, Life everlasting to
them.

Now when I see the assault of Atheists bent on
destruction,

Bent on despoiling the tomb, rending the
Christ from the shrine;

POEMS

Faith may be tempted to yield and question in
doubt and amazement :

Was it a phantom, a fraud—all I believed in
a lie?

If I am shaken awhile by zeal of contentious
denial,

Mischievous negative proof, wanton implac-
able hate,

Lo, in a vision the Lord, serene as He walked
in the garden ;

—Whom the Cross could not destroy, sceptics
shall rail on in vain.

ALL THINGS MUST DIE

SHE that once loved me, loves no more ;
Faded the flow'r of love I wore ;
The fire of youth inflames not now—
It seared these lines along my brow :
By hope no more my heart is warmed,
No prospect charms as once it charmed.

No joy, though sweet and pure, can last ;
Spring sheds its blossoms and is past ;
The rosy day of summer flies,
Sere autumn comes, and summer dies :
Then autumn with its waning glow
Is swept away in winter snow.

When fickle happiness takes wing,
Remorselessly it leaves its sting ;
Then, as a thirst-tormented wight
Thinks of the cup that sparkled bright,
Or one that's sinned beyond recall
Dreams of the days before his fall,

POEMS

Ev'n so in this belovéd spot,
Whose sweet enchantment alters not,
That folds me in its fond embrace,
Ev'n here the blight of change I trace :
It draws me with life-lasting ties,
For here my dead heart buried lies.

THE VEIL

BLESSED are the departed': Why?
How do we know that those who die
Find peace and comfort where they lie?

The world a wealth of pity spends
On parents, children, widows, friends,
Whose stricken hearts bereavement rends.

With them we weep; we share their pain;
We sigh with them who sigh in vain
For those who may not come again.

How do we know that they who weep
Are stabbed with pain one whit more deep
Than those whom we account asleep.

The body, not the spirit, dies,
And from the tomb wherein it lies,
We know the voice of Nature cries.

Though toil be sore, and trouble rife,
The man is loth to part with life
Who comes unconquered through the strife:

POEMS

And, dying, he, 'tis my belief,
Still lingers, an embodied grief,
Wailing, and finding no relief.

Whilst soul to body is attached
Life's pleasures and its pains are matched,
Its pangs endured, its rapture snatched.

Now in the grave, the dead set free
From flesh and all its frailty,
Nor sickness know, nor poverty :

But stronger, harder to control,
Survives the impulse of the soul,
Its life an everlasting whole.

The mourner stretches piteous hands
As unto one in far-off lands
Who neither hears nor understands.

But he the while is very near
And can both understand and hear,
Yet only answer tear with tear.

He also craves for touch and speech,
Ev'n as a drowning man may reach
T'ards one that stands upon the beach.

THE VEIL

For which were worse ; to find a grave
Untimely 'neath the insatiate wave,
Or watch, and lack the power to save ?

Does memory leave us with life's breath,
Remorse not haunt us after death ?
Whom God doth love He chasteneth ;

And though the body find release,
Not yet does our probation cease ;
Not yet for us peace, perfect peace.

Till Tyranny be overpast,
And from this void, and through that vast,
We pass and meet in Heaven at last.

FAITH, HOPE AND CHARITY

THREE things there are, the Scripture
saith,
That shall abide with us till death,
As Charity and Hope and Faith :
Withal, the greatest of the three,
So we are taught, is Charity.

Ah me, as life prolongs its scope,
With ills so great we have to cope
They hush the dying word of Hope :
The flattering tale that once it told
Is proved a cheat, as we grow old.

Unstinted Faith had we to spend
On one we loved, or called our friend ;
And we were bankrupt at the end :
Ev'n unbeguiled of all our store,
We'd find no heart to hazard more.

If Charity meant but to give,
'Twould serve us as a sedative,
On niggard doles the poor can live ;

FAITH, HOPE AND CHARITY

And in our scattered crumbs alone
We'd find our utmost duty done.

But nobler, sterner aims are meant ;
Kind thinking, speaking, hearts intent
On days in others' service spent :
Give our best selves ; count not the cost ;
Give Hope and Faith ourselves have lost.

MAN NOTHING HAS TO GIVE

THE bounties that are sent from Heaven
Man never can repay ;
For these are only lent, not given,
And may be taken away.

We cannot light the quickening sun,
Nor draw the freshening rain ;
We cannot make pure rivers run,
Nor swell the ripening grain.

The secret of the starry night,
The message of the Spring,
The mountain's lure, the ocean's might,
The groves where choirs sing :

The grace of mind to see and hear—
The grace that guides our feet
Where pain and peril come not near,
Where daily bread is sweet—

For all these boons bestowed on us
Man nothing has to give :

MAN NOTHING HAS TO GIVE

To pay back Heaven's overplus
Is there no way to live?

In serving we shall play our part
And keep our conscience clear ;
A humble and a contrite heart
Will find each duty near.

THE HIDDEN SHRINE

IN some old foreign city, so I hear,
There's a shrine where day and night
throughout the year,
A choir sings a requiem for the dead,
And lamps are always burning overhead.

The crowds without, that hurry to and fro,
Have ceased their lamentations long ago :
So short a time—and they remember not
The idol who was ne'er to be forgot.

Ah me, who can be steadfast? Each day brings
Its sordid tale of great and little things ;
And that which thrilled last year as worthless
seems
And brief as childhood's fears, as boyhood's
dreams.

We thought at least the spell of love must last :
As fierce as fire it burns : as soon is past :
Beneath a sullen cloud, through ashes cold
Springs a new growth and rank, that chokes
the old.

THE HIDDEN SHRINE

But memory in my heart has built a shrine
That evermore preserves one love of mine ;
And when my wearied spirit thither turns,
The music echoes still, the light still burns.

ITALY : 1911

WITH faces brown as arid soil,
And parched as withered vine,
Beneath the flaming sun they toil,
Loading the patient kine,
With promise of sweet olive oil
And draughts of pleasant wine.

Anigh beneath dark cypress trees
Cool-shaded flows the stream ;
It ripples to a quickening breeze
With points that dart and gleam ;
'Twere well to lie all day at ease
And gaze on it, and dream.

The trees and streams have needed not
To toil since time began ;
No will of theirs affects one jot
The course of Nature's plan ;
To strive and suffer are the lot
Alone of beast and man.

ITALY : 1911

And these toil on because they must ;
Man makes the beast his slave,.
Not deeming what he does unjust ;
There is no soul to save ;
He needs his aid lest, dust to dust,
He perish in the grave.

Man, after death to live again,
God-like in destiny ;
Beast, after labour, thirst, and pain,
To die eternally ;
Things of the everlasting plain—
Which were it best to be ?

O man, joy-stinted and toil-bent,
How can thy soul be glad ?
Poor beast, whose life in yoke is spent,
Surely thy case is sad :
Are cypresses and brooks content
To be in beauty clad ?

Yet peasants reared in strenuous ways,
Love children, home, and wife ;
The ox is tended all his days
And knows no world at strife ;
No tree, no running stream displays
A conscious joy in life.

POEMS

Man, thou canst teach for all to hear,
‘Let nothing thee dismay’:
Poor brute, we read thy lesson clear,
‘Be patient and obey’:
With sparkling brooks and cool trees near
To bless the cheerful day.

AIR-VOICES

OUT of the Past the voices come,
Some are sorrowful, joyful some ;
They sing aloft in the morning light
Or wail a dirge in the stormy night.

This one died with a smile on his lips,
And this went out in a dark eclipse :
Did I bring peace to that closing eye,
Did I inspire that parting sigh?

I think for all we have done aright,
We hear the songs of the morning light ;
But if our record of life is bad,
The sounds in our ears will be always sad.

And if in impenitent mood we die,
We haunt the world with our mournful cry ;
But all the good that we did or said
Will make sweet music when we are dead.

OLD AGE

HERE'S a sad thought—
The best is gone ; the sere of life remains,
The rest is nought:
Chill age dries up the current in my veins.

The zest of old
No longer sets my heart and pulse athrill ;
The tale is told,
The lights are out and all the music still.

I see unmoved
The maids that kindle fire in other men :
I who once loved,
And thought that none had ever loved till then.

Unenvious now
Another's fame and prowess I can see,
Who used to vow
Life's prizes as of right belonged to me.

OLD AGE

A faded rose,
Bereft of bloom and scent, a thing forlorn,
Despised of those
Who loved its beauty whilst they felt its thorn.

Now autumn trees ;
No scents, no silken texture to caress ;
Yet not in these
The hidden sting beneath the loveliness.

Now winter's come ;
The skies are dark, winds roar, and woods are
bare ;
But in my home
A glowing hearth, my chosen book and chair.

I taste no more
The sparkling cup that poisoned whilst it lured ;
The scars I bore
From fever's rage and ravage, time has cured.

'Tis better so :
A conscience clear ; a friend or two to keep ;
At last to know
That sweeter than the day's delight is sleep.

YOU AND I

SINCE you were you and I was I,
Before us lay Eternity,
But whither wending neither knew,
Since I was I and you were you.

Our Whence no less a mystery,
Since you were you and I was I ;
No light from out the darkness grew,
Since I was I and you were you.

Our present was exceeding nigh,
Since you were you and I was I ;
We seized each hour as it flew,
Since I was I and you were you.

'Twixt us was perfect sympathy,
Since you were you and I was I ;
Each other's souls we thought we knew,
Since I was I and you were you.

YOU AND I

And now a rift—can we deny
That you are you and I am I?
Not one in soul are we, but two,
—Since I am I and you are you!

FOR A SUNDIAL

A FLEETING hour, a passing shade,
All that belongs to me—
But I belong, my record made,
To all Eternity.

MATRI DILECTISSIMÆ

OFT in my dreams, Beloved, we meet
again—
Asleep, awake, 'tis phantoms we pursue:
Ah, gladly would I own I wrought in vain,
If I might surely have my dream come true.

ILLUSION

WE praise the past, and look with longing
eyes
At days aglow with golden memories :
Illusion ! every joyous hour we spent,
Brought a forgotten day of discontent.

RETROSPECT

KEEN was the pleasure; not less keen the
pain:
Recovered youth were rather loss than
gain.
Than Manhood's cares Youth's pangs afflict
not less,
And Time brings pleasures chastened from
excess.

ALPINE LADIES

NOT in their beauty lies their strength,
In strength their beauty lies ;
Their feet are of abnormal length
And quite uncommon size.

The female form divine I miss—
The missing it I rue—
They're like some monstrous beast, I wis,
That dwelleth in the Zoo.

There's nothing vile of woman born,
But as for these, I know,
They leave me calm as Matterhorn,
And cold as Alpine snow.

The mountain spell that here I seek
My fancy hath assailed ;
But not on any Alpine peak
I leave my heart impaled.

ALPINE LADIES

And yet large virtues they possess,
Endurance, energy ;
Perhaps it were worth while to guess
If they'd approve of me !

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